



Spring 2005

Child Care Chit Chat

A Newsletter by Family and Children's Services for Child Care Operators



WELCOME to the First 2005 Edition of Chit Chat



Connie Wilson
Manager, Child Care Services

This is a very interesting and exciting time for child care. The additional Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) funding has been put to good use in York Region. I would like to thank you all for your efforts in ensuring all ELCC funding that was directed for operating minor capital and expansion was fully spent. Your prompt attention to signing and returning surveys and contracts enabled us to distribute \$1,362,000 towards stabilizing and enhancing the child care system in York Region over the last six months.

I am pleased to announce that we have used all the additional funding directed to the child care fee assistance program by providing assistance to a monthly average of 602 more children by March 2005. Even with this additional funding, there continues to be a significant wait list for child care fee assistance. Additional funds for wage subsidy and Early Intervention Services were fully expended in 2004.

The new Provincial policy exempting RRSPs and RESPs as liquid assets and allowing contributions to these registered savings plans as an allowable expense when applying for fee assistance has also had a big impact on the way we do business. We are required to complete a file review for all families whose parental contribution (fee) may be affected by this policy change. You may see that some families' fees will decrease in the near future. This will not have an impact on payment of your approved daily rates. Please contact your Children's Service Representative if you have any questions related to a family's fee. Enclosed please find a revised Child Care Services Staff Directory for your use.

We have sent a request to the Province seeking confirmation of whether we will receive additional Early Learning and Child Care funds to support licensed operators to address health and safety related concerns in their child care programs. When we receive confirmation of funding we will distribute funding surveys and advise approved operators of funding allocations.

Please feel free to submit written requests and quotes for health and safety needs at anytime. Fax to (905) 895-5045 to my attention.

Although we can't guarantee funds will be available, we do wait list requests and flow unspent in-year funds as they become available.

Until our next *Chit Chat*...

Inside this edition:

Record of Attendance and Billing Reminders	2
New Pay Equity Commissioner Appointed	2
Director's Message	3
Pay Equity Memorandum of Settlement	3
Child Care Language Line	3
Expanded Eligibility Criteria for Child Care Fee Assistance	3
Child Care Fee Assistance Notice	3
EF Info Corner	3
Regional Schedule of Rates	4
Best Start Update	4
Our Children: A Preliminary Status Report on York Region's Children	4

Record of Attendance and Billing Reminders

Web-Based Record of Attendance

More than 60 % of child care operators are now taking advantage of the Web-based record of attendance/billing procedures. If you wish to take advantage of this fast and efficient billing option, please call Karen Scherer at (905) 830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675, ext. 2040 to register for a training session.

Vacancy Reports

Please, please, please complete the vacancy information on your Record of Attendance each month. The Region anticipates additional fee subsidy funding and uses the vacancy information to facilitate placement for families who are eligible for child care fee assistance. If you do not have any space availability, please record "0" beside each age group. Also, please be in contact with your Children's Services Representative regarding vacancies. Children's Services Representatives maintain a placement tracker and can work collaboratively with you to coordinate placements for children.

Summer Program Closures

Please advise your Children's Services Representative if your agency has plans to close one site and transfer children from that site to another during school breaks and summer. This will help to ensure that your Record of Attendance will be processed accurately.

Billing Adjustments

On occasion it is necessary to make an adjustment to your monthly billing. Effective immediately, the Region's Family and Children's Services Division will make adjustments to be paid the following month in which the discrepancy was discovered. By doing so, the Region will be able to count all full day equivalent (FDE) children and report accurate service delivery statistics to the Province. It is critical for the Region to report accurate FDE statistics to ensure continued funding allocation. Please help us reduce the need to make adjustments by completing your Record of Attendance forms accurately. Please be reminded that operators have 90 days to reconcile billing discrepancies.



Extra Billing

Please remember that, in accordance with your purchase of service agreement, you may not charge extra fees to families enrolled in your program who are on child care fee assistance. In 2004, Regional Council approved the addition of a School Age Full Day Summer Rate to the Regional Schedule of Rates. To be eligible for this rate, operators must list a separate summer rate to the public in their operating handbook.

New Pay Equity Commissioner Appointed

The Pay Equity Commission recently announced the appointment of a new Commissioner, Emanuela Heyninck, effective December 1, 2004.

Contact Ms. Heyninck, or any of the Commission staff, at 1-800-387-8813 or (416) 314-1896 if you would like them to attend your organization's meeting to discuss the benefits of maintaining and achieving pay equity, or speak at your conference or function.

To attend an employee's workshop or one of the Commission's regularly scheduled seminars, or if your group would like to host a pay equity session, contact the Commission or send an e-mail to pecinfo@mol.gov.on.ca. For more information on these free sessions, visit the Seminars page of the Commission web site at: www.gov.on.ca/lab/pec/peo/english/seminar.html

Director's Message

Elizabeth Wagle
Director, Family and Children's Services

Recently there has been increased awareness of the importance of the early years, from birth to age six, and the need to provide a wide range of supports and opportunities for all children. Investments in quality child care and early childhood education do more than pay significant returns to children - our future citizens. They also benefit taxpayers and enhance economic vitality. Research demonstrates that the return on public investment in high quality child care is substantial and includes both short and long term economic benefits.

Short term benefits include employment of about 3,000 individuals in the regulated child care sector in York Region. These employees spend wages and pay taxes while the child care centres in which they are employed buy goods and services. In addition, the thousands of parents who depend on regulated child care in order to work also spend wages, pay taxes and purchase goods and services. The revenue produced by the sector in York Region is estimated to be in excess of \$180 million.

In the long term, research demonstrates that quality child care helps prepare children to succeed in school and be successful citizens who earn more, pay more taxes and commit fewer crimes.

High quality child care is a wise investment. Let's hope that this wise investment will increase in Canada in the future.

Pay Equity Memorandum of Settlement

A request for the final base increase of 0.75 of 1% of the 2004 payroll has been submitted to the Province. This is the final base increase that the Province was required to pay under the Memorandum of Settlement and is to be paid out to staff employed between April 1, 2005 and December 31, 2005. Pay Equity Agreements will be amended to reflect this increase once the Provincial approval is received.

Child Care Language Line

Family and Children's Services co-ordinates interpretation services for families who speak Russian, Tamil, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Farsi, Urdu, Vietnamese and Arabic. Please refer families applying for child care fee assistance and requiring support in these languages to contact the Child Care Language Line toll free at 1-866-243-9942 or (905) 953-0983 for Newmarket residents.

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

All referrals for **child care fee assistance** are to be made to the Region's **KIDSLINE** at:

1-888-703 KIDS (5437) toll free or at (905) 830-9487 for Newmarket residents.

Shelley Bond is no longer responsible to take referrals for child care fee assistance.

Expanded Eligibility Criteria for Child Care Fee Assistance

Enclosed with this edition of Chit Chat is another poster regarding recent changes to eligibility criteria tied to RRSPs and RESPs, and the availability of additional child care fee assistance funding. Please feel free to copy this poster for families who may wish to apply for child care fee assistance.

If you did not receive a poster and would like one, contact Karen Scherer at 1-877-464-9675 or (905) 830 4444 ext. 2040

EF Info Corner

Enhanced Funding (EF) allows licensed child care providers to hire additional staffing, thereby enhancing their ability to include children with exceptional and significant special needs in their child care program.

- As of January 1, 2005 the Region began paying operators their approved hours for Enhanced Funding Workers who are eligible to be paid for statutory holidays.
- Enhanced Funding Workers are eligible to be paid for a child's unplanned absence for their pre-approved working shift to a maximum of four hours.
- The individual funding approval time limit has been increased to six hours per day as of January 1, 2005.

Regional Schedule of Rates

York Regional Council approved an increase to the Regional Schedule of Rates - Child Care Fee Assistance, effective January 1, 2005.

Council also directed that the maximum increase to operators' 2004 individual rates be held at 2.5%.

Operators receiving rates above the approved schedule will be held at their current rate.

Operators will not be paid a rate that exceeds their rate to the public currently on file with the Region. The market rate survey will continue to be conducted to allow the Region to conduct an analysis of average market rates on an annual basis.

Retroactive rate increases will be issued before July 31, 2005.

A final reminder that we can not approve rate increases mid-year as recommended increases are calculated within the approved annual budget.

Best Start Update

As you know, the Federal Government announced \$5 billion for a National Child Care Plan in the 2005 budget. The Budget Implementation Bill has not been passed. Therefore, no funding can be flowed to the Province of Ontario for the National Child Care Plan at this time.

The Province of Ontario intended to use this funding to support the Best Start Initiative.

We have been advised that, as a result of the political situation in Ottawa, Ontario is "very much in a sit tight situation".

The Province is continuing to work on:

- Revisions to Best Start Guidelines - earliest release end of May
- Capital template - earliest release end of May
- Three Demonstration Sites
- Three Panels - Chairs have been appointed

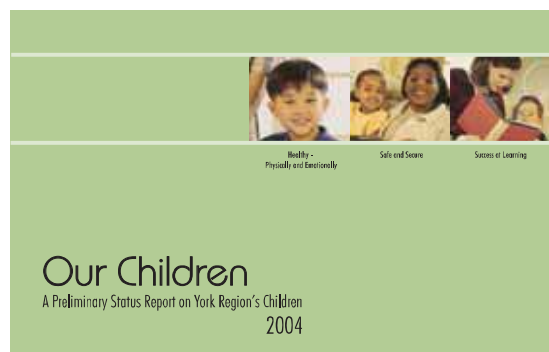
Our Children

A Preliminary Status Report on York Region's Children 2004

Our Children - A Preliminary Status Report on York Region's Children provides a tool for gauging and comparing progress in improving children's lives in York Region by identifying and reporting on indicators of children's well-being.

These indicators measure the well-being of children related to the goals identified in Canada's National Agenda. These goals include physically and emotionally healthy children, children who have opportunities to reach their potential and are successful at learning, and children whose basic needs are met and who are safe and secure.

A PDF version of the report can be found on the York Region's Web site at www.york.ca under Publications.



Child Care Chit Chat is produced by the Community Services and Housing Department's Family and Children's Services Division. For more information about any of the articles within, or about any issues relating to Child Care Fee Assistance, call Connie Wilson, Manager of Child Care Services at (905) 830-4444, ext. 2050. You can also access more information about York Region's children's services at our web site:

Go to www.york.ca and click Services > Children's Services